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WILLIAM III AS A REFORMER.

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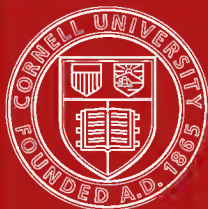


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# An Address

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY,

AT THE CELEBRATION OF ITS

*SIXTY-NINTH ANNIVERSARY,*

TUESDAY, JANUARY 6, 1874.

BY

FREDERIC DE PEYSTER, LL.D.,

PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.



NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED FOR THE SOCIETY.

MDCCCLXXIV.

FS

To *William Wood Esq.*

With the Compliments of

*THE AUTHOR.*



AT the annual meeting of the New-York Historical Society, held in its Hall, on Tuesday evening, January 6th, 1874,

FREDERIC DE PEYSTER, Esq., LL.D., delivered the Sixty-ninth Anniversary Discourse—Subject : “ William III. as a Reformer.”

On its conclusion, Mr. JAMES W. BEEKMAN, after some remarks, submitted the following resolution :

*Resolved*, That the thanks of the Society be presented to the President of the Society, FREDERIC DE PEYSTER, Esq., LL.D., for his learned and able address delivered before the Society this evening, and that a copy be requested for publication.

The resolution was seconded by the Rev. Dr. OSGOOD, with remarks, and was adopted unanimously.

Extract from the Minutes.

ANDREW WARNER,  
*Recording Secretary.*



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FREDERIC DE PEYSTER, LL.D.

FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT,  
WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT, LL.D.

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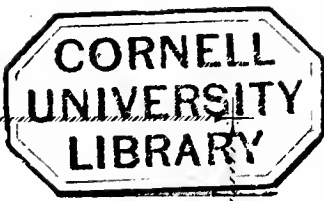
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A. 21638



# J. Watts de Peyster:

LL. D.

MASTER OF ARTS, COLUMBIA COLLEGE, OF NEW YORK, 1872.  
ROSE HILL, in the TOWNSHIP of RED HOOK, near TIVOLI P. O., DUCHESS CO., N. Y.

May, 1883.

JUDGE ADVOCATE, with the rank of MAJOR, 1845,  
COLONEL N. Y. S. I., 1846; assigned for "Meritorious Conduct," 1849;  
BRIGADIER-GENERAL for "Important Service" (first appointment—in N. Y. State—to that rank, hitherto elective) 1851, M. F. S. N. Y.  
ADJUTANT-GENERAL, S. N. Y., 1855.  
BREVET MAJOR-GENERAL, S. N. Y., for "Meritorious Services,"  
(first and only General officer receiving such an honor (the highest) from S. N. Y., and the only officer thus brevetted (Major-General) in the United States.)  
by "Special Act," or "Concurrent Resolution," New York State Legislature, April, 1866.

LAWS OF NEW YORK, Vol. 2.—59th Session, 1866, Page 2142.  
Concurrent Resolution requesting the Governor to Confer upon Brigadier-General J. WATTS DE PUYSTER [de Peyster] the brevet rank of Major (General) in the National Guard of New York.  
Resolved, (if the State concur), That it being a grateful duty to acknowledge in a suitable manner the services of a distinguished citizen of this State, rendered to the National Guard and to the United States prior to and during the Rebellion, the Governor be and he is hereby authorized and requested to confer upon Brigadier-General J. WATTS DE PUYSTER [de Peyster] the brevet rank of Major-General in the National Guard of New York, for meritorious services, which mark of honor shall be stated in the Commission conferred.  
STATE OF NEW YORK, in Assembly, April 9th, 1866.  
By order of the Assembly,  
J. R. CUSHMAN, Clerk.  
STATE OF NEW YORK, in Senate, April 20th, 1866.  
By order of the Senate,  
JAS. TERWILLIGER, Clerk.

The foregoing Resolution was duly passed.  
The foregoing Resolution was duly passed.  
\*So in original.

MILITARY AGENT, S. N. Y., (in Europe,) 1851-'53.  
HONORARY MEMBER, THIRD CLASS, of the MILITARY ORDER of the LOYAL LEGION of the U. S. FIRST HONORARY MEMBER Third (Army of the Potomac) Corps Union.  
HONORARY MEMBER of the CLARENDON HISTORICAL SOCIETY of Edinburgh, Scotland, and of the NEW BRUNSWICK (Canada) HISTORICAL SOCIETY (of St. John).  
MEMBER—10th June, 1872, DIRECTOR—of the GETTYSBURG BATTLEFIELD MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION, and VICE PRESIDENT of the SARATOGA (Battlefield) MONUMENT ASSOCIATION.  
MEMBER of the NETHERLANDISH LITERARY ASSOCIATION (Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde) at Leyden, Holland.  
RECIPIENT, 1856, of Three Silver Medals from H. R. M. OSCAR, King of Sweden and Norway, &c., for a Military Biography of LEONARD TORSTENSON, Field Marshal, Generalissimo; of a Gold Medal in 1852, from WASHINGTON HUNT, (Governor S. N. Y.) for "Efforts to Improve the Military System of New York," &c., &c., and Suggestions for a Paid Fire Department with Steam Fire Engines, &c., &c.;  
of a Gold Medal, only similar distinction ever ordered and conferred by the supreme military authority of the State of New York, by a Special Order, dated 8th September, 1851, of WASHINGTON HUNT, Governor and Commander in Chief of the Military Forces (S. N. Y.), authorized to be worn in attest of "Zeal, Devotion and Meritorious Services."  
of a Gold Medal, in 1852, from the FIELD and STAFF OFFICERS of his Command, 9th Brig., 3d Div., N. Y. S. Troops, "In testimony of their Esteem and Appreciation of his Efforts towards the Establishment of an efficient Militia," &c.  
in 1870, of a Magnificent Badge, Medal and Clasp voted at the Annual Meeting of the Third Corps (Army of the Potomac) Union held at Boston, Mass., Thursday, May 5th, 1870, when  
A Resolution was adopted to present a Gold Medal, of the value of \$500, to Gen. J. WATTS DE PEYSTER, of New York, as a testimonial of the appreciation by the Corps of his eminent services in placing upon record the true history of its achievements, and in defending its commanders and their men from written abuse and misrepresentation."  
and of several other Badges, Medals, &c., for services in connection with the military service of the State of New York.  
HONORARY MEMBER of the NEW JERSEY and of the MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETIES, and of the PHRENOLOGICAL SOCIETY of PENNSYLVANIA COLLEGE, Gettysburg; of the PHILOSOPHIC SOCIETY, Missionary Institute, Selma's Grove, and of the EUTERPEAN SOCIETY, Muhlenberg College, Albiontown, Pennsylvania, and of the GASMAN LITERARY SOCIETY, of Nebraska College, Nebraska City.  
HONORARY MEMBER of the LYCEUM SOCIETY in Casanova, Madison Co., N. Y.; and HONORARY MEMBER FOR LIFE of the AMERICAN RIFLE ASSOCIATION, to whom Gen. DE PEYSTER presented the most original, exquisite and unique Gold Badge and Clasp, to be shot for at the Annual Tests of Marksmanship.  
HONORARY MEMBER of the N. Y. BURNS CLUB.  
(BURNS was a member of the Dauntless Volunteers, of which Col. ABENT SCHUYLER DE PEYSTER, 5th or King's Foot, B. A., was Colonel, to whom the "National Bard of Scotland" addressed just before his death, in 1796, his "POEM ON LIFE," and  
LIFE MEMBER of the ST. NICHOLAS SOCIETY OF NEW YORK.  
(of which city JOHANNES DE PEYSTER, first of the name in the New World, was Schepen, 1655, Alderman, 1666, Burgomaster, 1673, Deputy Mayor, 1677. Mayoralty offered and refused).  
MEMBER  
of the NEW YORK, of the RHODE ISLAND (Newport) and of the PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL SOCIETIES and of the MILITARY ASSOCIATION of the STATE OF NEW YORK, and of the CENTURY CLUB, New York City.  
LIFE MEMBER  
of the HISTORICAL SOCIETY of MICHIGAN, of the NEW YORK GALLERY OF FINE ARTS, of the ALUMNI ASSOCIATION of COLUMBIA COLLEGE, in the City of New York, and Director of the N. Y. INSTITUTION for the INSTRUCTION of the DEAF and DUMB, and of the AMERICAN NUMISMATIC and ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY of NEW YORK.  
LIFE MEMBER or FELLOW of the AMERICAN GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY; of the ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY of GREAT BRITAIN; of the NUMISMATIC AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY of New York; PATRON of the ASSOCIATION for the BENEFIT of COLORED ORPHANS, and of the NEW YORK DISPENSARY; LIFE DIRECTOR of the AMERICAN TRACT and LIFE MEMBER of the AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY, N. Y.  
CORRESPONDING MEMBER  
of the STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETIES of MAINE, of VERMONT, of RHODE ISLAND, (Providence,) of CONNECTICUT and of WISCONSIN; of the LONG ISLAND, of the BUFFALO, and of ONEIDA COUNTY (S. N. Y.) HISTORICAL SOCIETIES; of the NEW ENGLAND HISTORIO-GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY; of the QUEBEC LITERARY and HISTORICAL SOCIETY; of the NUMISMATIC and ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY of PHILADELPHIA, Pennsylvania; etc., etc., etc.



# WILLIAM THE THIRD

AS A REFORMER.

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**T**HE century which witnessed the life of William III. is one of the most remarkable in history, and furnished a splendid theatre for his extraordinary career. The impulse which had been given to the world, by the revival of letters and the Protestant Reformation, had been communicated to all classes in society; and the result was to be seen in a universal and unparalleled activity in every department of life. The seventeenth century was, perhaps more than any other, a transition period. It is characterized more than any preceding epoch by what is known distinctively as modern thought. It witnessed, more than any preceding epoch, the shaping of political

institutions into the forms in which they now present themselves. The old was everywhere passing into the new.

At the very threshold of the century we find ourselves in the presence of that great work which has exercised such a powerful influence upon the English-speaking people—the authorized version of the Holy Scriptures. Besides the moral and spiritual benefits which this wonderful translation of the Bible has conferred upon the world, no other agency has so largely contributed to the preservation of the English language at the point of purity and strength which it had at that time attained. It was early in this century also that the Baconian system of Philosophy entered, as one of its most powerful factors, into our modern life. A little earlier, the first English colony was established on this continent, and the stupendous development of Anglo-Saxon civilization, on this side of the Atlantic, commenced. On the other side of the globe the East-India Company commenced its career, fraught with such momentous consequences to the teeming millions of Hindostan, and laying the foundations of that mighty dominion which has given to the Queen of England the title of “Empress of the Indies.”

The early years of the century witnessed the career of Gustavus Adolphus, and the triumphs for Protestantism which he achieved. The middle

period of the century witnessed the Great Rebellion, and the ascendancy of Oliver Cromwell. Just as the first half of the century was passing away, the "Peace of Westphalia" was signed at Munster, and the principle of the balance of power in Europe established. It was at this period, in the year 1650, that *William, Prince of Orange, was born.*

A period so remarkable for great movements and events must necessarily have had its great men also. The seventeenth century presents an array, seldom equalled in history, of men eminent in art, poetry, philosophy, theology, and government.

In Holland, we meet with the names of Grotius, Huygens, Leuwenhoeck, and, greater than all, the name of Benedict Spinoza. In Spain, all other names fade into insignificance before the genius of Calderon de la Barca. In Germany, it is enough that we find the name of Kepler, second only to Isaac Newton in the grandeur of his discoveries; superior perhaps to Newton in his fine, penetrating insight into the mysteries of nature.

In France, we have a brilliant array in the names of Corneille, Rochefoucault, Molière, Madame de Sévigné, Racine, Tillemont, Descartes, Malebranche, Bourdaloue, and Pascal. In Italy, we have Salvator Rosa, Bentivoglio, Torricelli, Filicaja, Sforza Pallavicino, Rainaldi, and Magliabecchi. But it was in England that the period seemed to be most fruitful in great

men in every department of intellectual activity. There were Ford, Ben Jonson, Massinger, Cowley, and John Milton. In another department of literature we meet the names of Camden, Raleigh, Cotton, Purchas, Thomas Fuller, Clarendon, Izaak Walton, and John Bunyan. In still another we find Francis Bacon, Usher, Hobbes, Chillingworth, Barrow, Pearson, Jeremy Taylor, Algernon Sydney, Ralph Cudworth, Tillotson, Leighton, Baxter, and Boyle. Scarcely any other period of years in the history of the world, especially in England, will be found so prolific in men distinguished in every walk of life, and exercising so powerful and permanent an influence upon the progress of mankind. It was in the midst of this century, and surrounded by this brilliant constellation, that *William*, Prince of Orange, *came upon the public stage*.

As our purpose is to speak of William as a Reformer, and to consider especially his relation to modern thought and progress, it is not necessary to dwell upon the circumstances of his early life, nor to sketch his strange and eventful career as the youthful general and Stadtholder of his native land.

But in order rightly to estimate his place in history, it will be well to trace his ancestry, and observe the links which bound him to all the great moving influences of his time. He was the son of William II. of Orange, and his mother was the Princess



Mary of England, the daughter of Charles I. His grandfather was the Stadtholder Frederic Henry, a brother of the great Maurice of Nassau. His great-grandfather was William the Silent, and his great-grandmother, the wife of William the Silent, was the daughter of Admiral Coligny. This is indeed a noble and wonderful lineage; and in it are to be found subtle and mysterious influences which prepared William for the great part which he was to play in establishing the Reformation upon a lasting basis, and reconciling, in some degree at least, the principles and prejudices of the Stuart party in England to modern ideas and progress.

If we would bring before our minds the aspect of the great prince to whom the destinies of England were committed at the most critical period perhaps in its history, we must imagine a man less than forty years of age, but already old. Worn with innumerable cares and wasted with disease, his attenuated body seemed scarcely able to sustain the burden of life; but his iron and invincible will forced it to the performance of the most Herculean labors.

William had already accomplished a vast work in the line of the great mission which he considered as especially imposed upon him. He regarded the rapidly rising power of France, under Louis XIV., as the great danger to Protestantism and freedom in Europe. This power, while yet no more than the

Stadtholder of Holland, he had been able to hold at bay; and he had already given indications of consummate statesmanship in the coalition against France which he had already formed, when he, as *William the Third*, was called to the throne of England.

No statesman ever had a more difficult task to accomplish in the way of harmonizing conflicting interests, and introducing needed reforms, than that which devolved upon William when he became King of England.

In order to understand this, it is necessary to consider the peculiar influences of the times in which he lived, and the special circumstances by which he was surrounded. His career was passed at the centre of the most potent forces of the world, at the very beginning of what is understood by the expressions "Modern Thought" and "Modern Society." The old feudal system, with all its manifold relations to life, was passing away, and the process had commenced, so significant in the history of the world, of the substitution of the relations of contract in its place.

The impulse which had been given to thought, and which had its principal expression in the great Reformation, now began to reveal its presence in the most widely separated departments of life. Throughout all Europe there was the stirring of a

new intellectual power applied to every sphere of human interest.

In estimating the place and influence of William III. in history, we must remember that the time in which he lived was very early, perhaps altogether too early, to rightly estimate the meaning and the direction of the great movements which were going on. If William saw that there was an irresistible tendency, revealing itself even in his time, towards a democratic condition of society, in which the vast masses of the people were to be lifted up to a position of higher social and political privileges; if he laid hold at that time of some of the great principles of civil and religious freedom, it is certainly something remarkable in the circumstances in which he was placed. And if he wisely adapted means to ends, and set the nation, over which he was called so mysteriously to reign, in the path of modern progress and development, his place among the great statesmen of the world will have been established. A critical examination of his history will show that he was all this, and more.

The antagonism involved in this transition from the Old society to the New had nowhere a more intense development than in England. Intelligence, and at least a rudimentary education, were much more widely diffused in England than on the Continent. Besides this, the Reformation had interwoven

itself with English life, and had imparted a mighty impulse to English development.

Still more, the principles of personal freedom and responsibility seemed to inhere in the race which had become paramount in England. It was the Indo-European family in its Germanic, or more distinctly its Saxon, form. Its relationship was most intimate with the race-developments and languages of Holland and Germany. Indeed, it had received, centuries before, from Holland some of the most potent forces of its history.

Through its whole history there had been a more or less distinct and conscious struggling after justice and freedom. The Magna Charta and the Common Law of England, the adjustment of the rival claims of Church and State, and the vindication of the right of England to order its own affairs and proceed in the line of its own development, without the dictation of any foreign ecclesiastical power, were the significant marks by which the progress of this struggle was indicated. If we examine the condition of English society in the reign of James II., which was the condition upon which William III.'s influence was to be specially exercised, we shall find a complication of antagonistic influences scarcely paralleled in the history of the world. We have a sovereign belonging to a reactionary family, and possessing every retrograde tendency of that family; devoted to the theory

of the absolute mastership of the king; a bigot throughout every fibre of his being; hostile to the prevailing tendencies to civil and religious freedom, and determined to restore, as far as possible, the condition of things before the Reformation.

Many among the nobility agreed with him; but many also were irrevocably opposed to the purposes which he cherished. The common people were overwhelmingly Protestant, and upon them and their steadfastness the hope of the nation was placed. The representatives of the National Church could be depended upon, as a whole, to resist the introduction of Romish influences into the realm. Some of the Bishops, as we shall presently see, took a noble stand in this respect. The clergy also stood firm. But the problem was rendered more complicated and difficult by the fact that the Dissenting body were as jealous of the Established Church as the adherents of the Established Church were of the Romanists. It must have seemed well-nigh impossible to reconcile such conflicting interests as these.

This was the task, however, which William III. was compelled to undertake, and to do it, too, in spite of the additional difficulty that his right to govern at all was regarded by many as highly questionable, if not absolutely without foundation.

It is exceedingly interesting to notice the wisdom

with which William laid the foundations of his future influence and power, when negotiations were opened with him in regard to the throne of England. Although himself the grandson of Charles I., it was chiefly because his wife was the daughter of James II. that he was called to the rescue of Protestantism and constitutional liberty in England. It was clear that Mary must be Queen, whatever the position that he might occupy. Had his wife been other than she was, this might have proved a great embarrassment ; for William was determined to be king, in the fullest sense of the term, if he accepted at all the overtures of the English people. But Mary was one of the truest and most devoted of wives, and had no ambition, and knew no purpose in life, but to promote the great objects which he had in view. In addition, however, to the sweetness of disposition and amiability which were such prominent characteristics of her nature, she possessed great good sense and remarkable tact, even in circumstances requiring the utmost shrewdness and self-possession. With such qualities as these there was little difficulty in bringing about the only arrangement to which William would consent, that of joint occupancy of the throne. With a wife so devoted to his interests, this was to be practically sole sovereign of England.

Not long after his accession, and when he had established himself in some degree of security upon

the throne, he devoted himself to the cause of ecclesiastical reform. A Presbyterian by birth and education, he exhibited extraordinary breadth and toleration when he found himself at the head of the English Church. He endeavored to secure not only toleration, but valuable civil rights for the Roman Catholics, at a time when England had become intensely Protestant, and when scarcely a privilege could be accorded to them which they were not sure to abuse. He probably would have preferred a moderate Episcopacy in Scotland, but he wisely fell in with the prevailing preference of the people, and laid the foundations of the present ecclesiastical system of the northern kingdom. He was chiefly interested, however, in the relation of the Non-Conformists to the Established Church. He issued a royal Commission, constituting ecclesiastical commissioners, whose special duty it was to propose a revision of the Book of Common Prayer. This was a part of the general scheme of William for ecclesiastical reform. It had been a cherished purpose with him to bring the Non-Conformists back into the Church ; but in order to accomplish this it seemed necessary that certain modifications should be made in the Liturgy.

The Commission thus appointed consisted of ten Bishops and twenty other divines. Among the Bishops is to be found the name of the Arch-

bishop of York; the political position of Sancroft, the Archbishop of Canterbury, rendering his appointment impossible. Of the other clergy six were Deans, four were Professors and Doctors of Universities, four were Archdeacons, and six were of the London clergy. The members of this Commission were among the most distinguished men of the land. This will be recognized at once when we mention the names of Stillingfleet, Burnet, Patrick, Tillotson, Hall, and Tenison.

Few men have attained so wide a fame by writings, at so early a period of life, as Stillingfleet, whose liberal opinions made him a most important coadjutor of the king, and one of the most advanced men of his age. Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury, the first bishop appointed by William, was one of the most prominent men of his time. Few men have been so greatly liked, and so bitterly hated. The frankness with which he avowed his opinions gained him many friends, while the latitudinarian character of his opinions made him many enemies. The fact that these strong personal feelings in regard to him have been perpetuated from generation to generation, is evidence of the profound impression which he has made upon the history of England.

Patrick was a man of great learning, and a laborious commentator on the Scriptures. His special



duty in the Commission was the expanding and ornamenting of the Collects, which were thought to be too short and dry. As a specimen of Patrick's work in the similar undertaking of expanding and ornamenting the version of the Canticles, Lord Macaulay gives the following paraphrase upon the beautiful verse: "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him I am sick of love." Patrick's version is as follows: "Lo, I turned myself to those of my neighbors and familiar acquaintance, who were awakened by my cries to come and see what the matter was, and conjured them, as they would answer it to God, that if they met with my beloved, they would let him know, —What shall I say? What shall I desire you to tell him, but that I do not enjoy myself now that I want his company, nor can be well till I recover his love again?" Upon this Lord Macaulay remarks, that "the choice of Patrick for the work of expanding and ornamenting the Collects seems to have been in one respect unexceptionable, for if we may judge by the way in which he paraphrased the most sublime Hebrew poetry, we shall probably be of the opinion that whether he was or was not qualified to make the Collects better, no man that ever lived was more competent to make them longer."

No divine in that period enjoyed a greater reputation as a sermonizer than Archbishop Tillotson.

Posterity has not confirmed this estimate. Perhaps the view of the present time is as mistaken as that of Tillotson's contemporaries. There are certainly wonderful smoothness and clearness in Tillotson's style; and his sermons are thoughtful and instructive without being specially profound.

Of the remarkable character and ability of these and other men upon this Commission there can be no doubt. They seem to have addressed themselves to their work with earnestness and industry. They continued for about six weeks, holding eighteen sessions, besides having numerous sessions of sub-committees.

The work of revision proceeded to the end of the Communion Service. Circumstances here interrupted the further prosecution of the work. No report was made to Convocation; and the results to which the Commissioners had arrived were not suffered to become public. It was not until the year 1854 that the Revision of these Royal Commissioners was given to the world. On the 14th of March of that year a motion was made in the House of Commons, by Mr. Heywood, in consequence of which an Address was voted for a copy of the alterations in the Book of Common Prayer prepared by the Royal Commissioners for a revision of the Liturgy in 1689. The only copy in existence was in the Archbishop's Library at Lambeth. It is

now published as one of the Blue-Books of the House of Commons.

It is well, probably, that this effort was arrested by the non-juring schism. Noble as the idea of the comprehension of the Non-Conformists was, it was probably too late for its realization ; and any changes in the Services of the Church would have been likely to strengthen the non-jurors, who would then have seemed to be the true representatives of the old National Church.

But while this effort failed, in the special form in which it was undertaken, the whole influence of William, in the propositions which he made and the legislation which he suggested, was given to that moderation and breadth which have ever since, for the most part, characterized what may be called the civil administration of the Church of England. A profound impression seems to have been made at that time in regard to the comprehensiveness of the National Church, and the necessary duty of toleration of widely different schools of opinion. Since that time there has not been a single Primate of all England who has not held and administered his high office in that spirit. The judgments of the highest ecclesiastical courts have been in accordance with the same great idea, and have been remarkable for the breadth and generosity of principles by which they were governed. For this the English

nation is deeply indebted to the Christian wisdom and controlling influence of William, Prince of Orange.

It is well, perhaps, at this point, that we should bring before ourselves the formidable difficulties by which William was surrounded in every movement which he made for reform. As a foreigner he was disliked in England. His reserved manner and taciturn disposition, which belonged to him by inheritance, and were absolutely necessary to him in the position in which he was placed, alienated from him many who would otherwise have been his friends and supporters. He was surrounded by conspirators and assassins. There was not a single moment of his reign when his right to the throne was not contested and denied. He was obliged to wage wars in Scotland, in Ireland, and on the Continent. The poor, feeble, wasted frame of the king was doomed to the most painful efforts and sacrifices for a nation not his own, but whose destiny Providence had so mysteriously confided to his hands.

The most trying thing of all was, that Parliament seemed incapable of entering into the grandeur of his designs and the noble disinterestedness of his purposes. There is nothing more pathetic in the whole history of the English nation than the almost broken-hearted utterances of William, when he begged of the Commons to provide him with an army adequate to

maintain the pre-eminence of England in Continental affairs, or else permit him to abdicate in favor of the Princess of Denmark.

All these difficulties are to be taken into the account when we consider the relation of William to the great reforms which have been owing, more or less, to the influence which he exerted. An illustration of the extreme difficulties by which he was embarrassed—difficulties proceeding even from those who were themselves earnestly desirous of reform—is to be found in the necessity frequently imposed upon him of resorting to the veto power, which has been exercised only once in the almost two centuries since his death.

The first time that William was compelled to exercise this prerogative is an instance in point. The Bill of Rights had deprived the crown of the power of arbitrarily removing the judges, but it had not made them entirely independent. They were to be remunerated partly by fees and partly by salaries. The king could not control the fees, but the salaries were under his power. He could increase or reduce them at will. This was evidently not as it should be. A bill was brought in to rectify the matter by making the remuneration a thousand pounds; but this was unfortunately made a charge upon the hereditary revenue. It was impossible for William to protect the rights of the crown, which

were equally important as any other rights, without exercising the prerogative of vetoing the bill. We have here a most instructive illustration of the difficulties under which William inevitably labored.

It may sound paradoxical, but it is doubtless true, that one of the great benefits conferred by William upon England was the originating of the national debt. Lord Macaulay has given a brilliant account of the growth of this debt, and the astonishment and dismay of the country at each stage of its progress. He has shown, also, how marvellously the nation prospered, and has demonstrated its ability to bear the present burden of its enormously increased debt with greater ease than it bore the comparatively trifling indebtedness of the early part of the eighteenth century. The mistake has been made of supposing that there is a strict analogy between the debt of one individual to another and the debt of a government to its own subjects.

William was wise enough to understand that his government could have no more effectual guarantee of its permanence than the fact that it was indebted to the great majority of his subjects—a debt the interest of which it was perfectly able to pay so long as it continued in power, but both the interest and principal of which were sure to be lost if it were overthrown. The effect of the national debt from that time to this has been to furnish a means

of safe investment for the earnings of the people, and to interest them, in the most practical way, in the maintenance of the existing order of things.

It had been a very glaring defect in the working of the political system in England, that the House of Commons did not truly represent its constituency. This had been flagrantly the case during the protracted Parliament in the time of Charles II.

The duration of Parliament was dependent upon the royal prerogative. William jealously guarded his prerogative in this respect by refusing his assent to what was called the Triennial Bill, which limited the duration of Parliament to three years. But no sovereign of England ever studied more attentively the indications of public sentiment, or labored more assiduously to mould legislation in accordance with that sentiment.

It was in the reign of William that the peculiar institution known as the Ministry originated. During the early years of his reign he had acted upon a generous and apparently wise purpose, to permit the different political parties in England to be represented in his councils; but later he adopted a different method, and established the present admirable administration. A Ministry now is selected from one of the great dominant parties. It assumes the responsibility of government. So long as it can command the confidence of the representatives of

the people it remains in power. When confidence in the wisdom of its measures is lost, an appeal is made to the people in a new election of the House of Commons; or a new Ministry, representing the Opposition, is at once appointed. It is impossible, therefore, for the executive and legislative departments of the government to be in antagonism; and while there are salutary checks upon public sentiment, the sober, final judgment of the people must prevail. For this provision, so wonderfully adjusted to the whole machinery of government, England is indebted to the wise forecast and sagacious statesmanship of William III.

The great bulwark of the liberties of the people, in modern times, is the emancipation of the press from the control or censorship of Government. The right of freely criticising the measures of Government, and of advocating whatever may be thought desirable for the public good, is the inalienable prerogative of every citizen. It was during the reign of William that this freedom of the press was for the first time secured.

The policy of William in reference to Ireland demands a moment's consideration. No difficulties which the British Government has encountered have been more complicated and vexatious than those which have arisen from the relations of England with Ireland. Differences of race and differences of reli-



gion originally embittered the feelings of the inhabitants of one island against the inhabitants of the other. Interests diametrically opposed have intensified the dislike, and even hatred, which have been engendered by the fierce conflicts which resulted in the subjugation of Ireland.

A long series of mistaken legislation, to use no stronger term, has tended to widen the chasm between the conquered and the conquering race. It is only within the last few years, and especially under the administration of Mr. Gladstone, that the purpose has been entertained of governing Ireland upon principles of equality and justice. The principal form which this new legislation has taken is the removal of disabilities under which the Irish Roman Catholics have suffered in consequence of their religion. The disestablishment of the Irish Church has been the one great step in this process, and the subject of University education in Ireland has been met by the Government in the largest and freest spirit; but no practical result has yet been reached, owing to obstacles interposed by the Irish themselves.

The spirit of this legislation was cherished by William, and he would have given it practical expression, but the religious animosities of the times rendered it impossible. The great Defender of Protestantism in Europe, he extended the privilege of free

worship to the Romanists in the provinces ceded by France in the treaty of Ryswick. And although compelled to wage war upon Irish soil, for the maintenance of his throne, he was ready to relieve his conquered subjects from all disabilities on account of their faith. It was impossible, however, to carry this purpose into effect. The vehement remonstrance which came from the Protestants of Ireland and England, at every suggested concession to the Romanists, interposed such obstacles that William was obliged to content himself with such temporary expedients as he might be able to adopt, and leave the noble work of justice to Ireland for a more fortunate age.

The chief triumph, however, of William's statesmanship, and that which he regarded as his great mission, and to which his whole public life was devoted, was the coalition against France. At that time France was the most dangerous foe in Europe to civil and religious freedom. Under the splendid but delusive administration of Louis XIV. it attained colossal power. It was absolutely necessary for the safety of Protestantism, and the progress of society, that this power should be checked.

The revocation of the Edict of Nantes had aroused an inextinguishable hatred against France, which burned in the Huguenot blood of William. There were some extraordinary circumstances which

· favored this coalition against France ; and of these William most skilfully availed himself.

Spain was jealous of France, and fearful of her increasing power ; and the Protestant William was able to enlist the Spain, which had so cruelly devastated the Netherlands, among his allies. Catholic Austria was also brought into the coalition. But what is more extraordinary than all, is the fact that the Pope himself became the ally, against France, of William Prince of Orange. William was able to make such use of the apprehensions of the Papacy, in regard to the Gallican liberties, as to make the Church of Rome, as represented in the Supreme Pontiff himself, the great bulwark, for the time, of Protestantism in Europe. No stronger evidence could be given of the most consummate statesmanship. This great purpose of William's life he pursued amid incredible difficulties with the most unflinching boldness and persistency.

There can hardly be a doubt but that, under God, the overthrow and destruction of Protestantism in Europe were averted by the transcendent genius with which William, through so many years, presided over this strange, inexplicable coalition against France.

As the coalition against France was the great work of William III., so far as continental politics were concerned, it may be well to refer to some of the steps

which led to its dissolution and the final settlement between the allied powers and France.

A very important advantage was gained by Louis XIV., in being able at last to withdraw the Pope, whom William with transcendent skill had used as virtually one of the parties in the Coalition. The difficulty between the Pope and Louis had arisen from the assertion of what are known as the Gallican Liberties, in an assembly of ecclesiastics in 1682. Those of the number who were subsequently appointed Bishops by the King were refused confirmation by the Pope. The Church of France was, therefore, in an anomalous position, and the Supreme Pontiff was actually enlisted in the service of the enemies of the King.

Louis XIV. was obliged to make very important concessions before he could make his peace with the Papacy. Each of the Bishops whose appointment was not confirmed by the Pope was required to write in the most humble terms to the Pope, and although not retracting the principles of the assembly of 1682, yet declaring that the things then decreed should be as though they were not decreed. The King also wrote to the Pope that he had given orders that the things contained in his edict of March 22d, 1682, and claiming certain immunities for the Church of France, should not be observed.

Upon these concessions the necessary bulls were

issued by the Pope. Peace was established between the contending parties; but a severe blow was dealt to the cause of Bossuet, and the independence of the Gallican Church.

The bringing of the Coalition to terms was not, however, so easy a matter. There was to be hard fighting first, and concessions of the most important character were to be extorted from the "great King." The first concession, perhaps the most humiliating to Louis, had already been made, in his recognition of the *usurper* William, as King of England.

In 1696 we find William disposed to treat for peace, and in the spring of 1697 a congress was held, with this object in view, at the chateau of Neuburg-Hausen, belonging to William, near the village of Ryswick. These negotiations led to the Peace of Ryswick, by which the Great Alliance was broken. The price paid by Louis XIV. to William III. for this rupture was the full recognition of the Protestant succession in England and the restitution of vast territories. The negotiations which resulted in the rupture of the Alliance and the Peace of Ryswick seem to have been carried on principally between Boufflers, on the part of Louis, and the Duke of Portland on the part of William. France had conquered in the wars, but, as has been well said, "conquered without increasing her power." William yielded nothing of any real importance to him. Louis beheld his

territorial acquisitions vanish, and the boundaries of his kingdom recede to the limits of 1678.

The eighteenth century had dawned when William died, and all the great foundation principles peculiar to modern society had been established. If Lord Bacon was the chief representative of these principles upon their theoretic side, it is certain that they had no more prominent and effective representative upon their practical side than William III.

Surrounded with stupendous difficulties, apparently insuperable to the soldier and the statesman alike, he rescued Protestantism and free institutions in England, and made both Protestantism and freedom formidable throughout the continent of Europe. He possessed the remarkable faculty, unequalled perhaps in any other man, of wresting victory from defeat. Scarcely ever successful on the battle-field, he made the triumphs of his enemies more barren and bitter than their defeat could possibly have been. He frequently and conspicuously failed to carry through political measures which he had undertaken, but none the less did he bear forward the great cause of civil and religious liberty, to which his life was devoted. The world to-day has entered upon the prolific fruits of his labors.

Our own country, during the formative period in the history of its institutions, is immensely indebted, —and we should gratefully acknowledge it,—to the

influence of the Prince of Orange. It is a singular fact that some of the highest tributes that have been paid to William are from the country of his enemies. Ernest Moret, in his *Quinze Ans du règne de Louis XIV.*, has eloquently said of him, "He had the first virtue of great men—will—will. His feeble body bore a soul of iron. He willed! He had willed to govern Holland; at twenty-two years of age he was Stadtholder. He had willed to be king of England; he died with the crown of Elizabeth upon his head." William was at once Orator, Diplomatist, Statesman, Soldier. And it has been well said by Paul Grimblot, in his edition of the letters of William III. and Louis XIV., "It ill becomes a foreigner, I am aware, to reproach any nation with a want of gratitude. But William III. is not a man of one nation more than another; he is the representative of a principle! Frenchman though I be, I look upon William III. as one of the greatest characters of history."

Like most of those who have conferred great benefits upon humanity, the life of William was one of disappointment, toil, and suffering. Nothing but his unflinching purpose and the irresistible impulse of his will sustained him through bodily infirmity, the hatred of enemies, the coldness of friends, the ingratitude of those for whose deliverance all he had and was had been given. The latter years of his

life were saddened still more by the loss of his noble and devoted wife, from whose dying-bed he had been carried in convulsions in the agony of his grief.

But he won the inheritance of freedom, and bequeathed it to the English-speaking peoples for an everlasting possession ! As this mighty figure of William disappears from history, we recall the striking lines of the German poet Stolberg, which carry us back in imagination to the cradle of the great political Reformer :

“Welcome, great century of Liberty,  
Thou fairest daughter of slow-teeming Time.  
With pangs unwont she bore,  
And hailed her mighty child.  
Trembling, she took thee with maternal arms ;  
Glad shudders shook her frame ; she kissed thy front ;  
And from her quivering lips  
Prophetic accents broke.  
‘ Bold is thy rolling eye,  
And strong thy tender hand ;  
And soon beside thy cradle shall be heard  
The tunes of warfare, and the clash of arms !  
And thou shalt hear with smiles  
As on thy mother’s breast.  
I see thee quickly grow with giant step ;  
With streaming golden hair, with lightning eye,  
Thou shalt come forth,—and Thrones  
With Tyrants tread to dust ! ’ ”

















